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A ~~Stranger~~ PUBLICATION

Spring & Summer 2016

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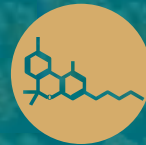
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table of contents



MICHELLE CONNER

LOOK AT THAT.

Behold the natural light of Eastern Washington making that greenhouse's walls glow, while the artificial light of an electric bulb illuminates those greens.

The plant you see there is **a crop that's hard to come by**. We had to send a photographer two hours east of Seattle, to Ellensburg, to get this shot. This is a **high-CBD** plant, which is science talk for "it will get you slightly stoned without leaving you thunderfucked." Tobias Coughlin-Bogue explains why this weed is so great—and why so few customers and even budtenders know about it—on page 10.

KELLY O, who used to be infamous for Drunk of the Week, was also apparently once Stoner of the Century. On page 26, she tells a story about **eating a pot brownie** and going to the Laser Dome. If you want to be like her (they have made it easier to find the restrooms in the dark, we hear), the current

Laser Dome schedule is on page 33.

DAVID SCHMADER just published a book called *Weed: The User's Guide*. Here's one of the illustrations in it:



THIS IS HOW MUCH WEED IT
WOULD TAKE TO KILL YOU.

ALEX DESPAIN

On page 35, Schmader answers our questions about dabbing, Maureen Dowd, and whether it's okay to name your bong.

Schmader has two book-release parties—one for stoners who want to watch stuff on a big screen and eat popcorn, another for nerds who want to talk about the scientific and political reality of weed today—both of which appear in this issue's **THINGS TO DO STONED** calendar, on page 55. There's plenty of other stuff in there, too.

This issue wraps up with a story about military service members who've returned from combat with **PTSD**. Twenty-two veterans commit suicide *every day* in this country, the VA is not adequately equipped to take care of them, and the pills the VA prescribes to cope with civilian life just don't work effectively for PTSD—but **weed does**. Three former soldiers here in Washington State tell their stories, starting on page 43.



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Ask for **“High-CBD”** Weed Instead

By Tobias Coughlin-Bogue

photos by Michelle Conner

For every weed smoker who wants to get as high as possible, there's someone else who has a light-duty panic attack—or maybe a heavy-duty panic attack—whenever they try cannabis. Most of these people eventually just decide they're “not a pot person.” They want to relax, and even the strains that are said to be relaxing don't help them relax. Many of these people

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LIFE GARDENS IN ELLENSBURG *High-CBD crops are only about a tenth of what Life Gardens grows. High-CBD strains like Blueberry Essence share space with high-THC strains in these greenhouses. The man in red is farm tech Kyle Mullins.*

wholeheartedly support the legalization of marijuana, but they aren't getting to enjoy its benefits.

I'm one of them, and it sucks.

While I used to love pot, and want to love pot again, it hasn't been easy to do. Ninety percent of the time, I get super high, much higher than I would like, and it is a terrifying experience for me. Instead of enhancing life, it sends my mind spinning into a tornado of anxiety and paranoia. Recreational budtenders will tell you that sativas are the high-energy strain of weed, giving you a "head high" that's perfect for daytime, and indicas are the relaxing strain of weed, giving you a "body high" and preparing you for sleep, and but even trying a range of indicas didn't work for me. They made my heart pound and my mind race. Since there are now so many varieties of legal weed available, I've been looking for a way to fit pot back into my life, but I kept failing to find anything anywhere near calm enough for me.

My friend Nick, a local DJ who also doesn't partake as often as he'd like to, summed up the search perfectly.

"I'm looking for some dad weed," he said. "Like, weed

you can smoke and still pick somebody up at the airport."

He's not alone. There are plenty of people out there looking for weed they can smoke that doesn't cancel their plans. They want to go hiking, they want to read and comprehend literature, they want to be able to relax, they

I've been looking for a way to fit pot back into my life, but I kept failing to find anything anywhere near calm enough for me.

want to ride the bus without feeling everyone's penetrating gaze—they want to do all manner of other normal fun stuff. They want to be lightly stoned. They don't want to be thunderfucked.

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Though there is a lot about weed we still don't know, it's generally agreed that the THC in weed is what makes you high. And both indicas and sativas in the recreational market usually have about 18 to 25 percent THC in them. Why is there so much THC in weed? Because in the old days, on the black market, the higher you got, the better the weed was considered to be—the more bang for your buck—and black-market weed plants were the foundation for most of the weed now grown and sold in the recreational market. Most of the customers in the recreational market still have that mentality: If two products cost the same, and one of them has more THC than the other, that's what customers will buy.

But THC is just one of many cannabinoids in marijuana, and now that the state is filled with expert cultivators, some growers are cultivating for other cannabinoids—including cannabidiol, commonly referred to as CBD. High-CBD products are primarily associated with medical marijuana, as CBD has fantastic painkilling and epilepsy-fighting properties. It isn't psychoactive the way THC is. It doesn't turn your brain into a bouncy ball the way THC does. In fact, it's thought that the CBD in a plant is what regulates the THC high. A plant with high CBD levels and low THC levels is awesome for anybody who is looking to enjoy some of the many benefits of pot sans mental debilitation.

"I recommend CBD to all novice users," said Dr. James Lathrop, founder of Cannabis City, the city's first recreational pot store. Lathrop is a doctor of nursing practice and a third-year PhD student at UW with a research focus on cannabis. "Certainly for people who are prone to anxiety, someone who doesn't want that high-THC effect, the high-CBD strains can really do it."

Strains like Sour Tsunami, AC/DC, or Charlotte's Web are primarily CBD, often containing less than 1 percent THC. The plant you see on the cover of this magazine, being grown in a greenhouse in Ellensburg, is Life Gardens' high-CBD Blueberry Essence strain. The strain's THC content ranges from below 1 percent to as high as 5 percent, with CBD content ranging from 5 percent up to 15 percent. The ratio of CBD to THC varies, but it is never usually lower than three to one, said Rachael Lowatchie, administrative director at Life Gardens. While these strains aren't very psychoactive, meaning you won't feel more than the faintest head high, they still have profound effects. People love CBD, and for good reason. In ad-

Indicas and sativas in the recreational market usually have about 18 to 25 percent THC in them. Why is there so much THC in weed? Because in the old days, on the black market, the higher you got, the better the weed was considered to be.

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JAMES LATHROP *"I recommend CBD to all novice users," says the founder of Cannabis City, who's also a doctor of nursing practice. "Certainly people who are prone to anxiety."*

dition to being an extremely promising medical compound—one that caused CNN medical correspondent Dr. Sanjay Gupta to change his tune on cannabis and come out in support of legalization—it's got a whole host of more mundanely awesome benefits.

"I find it to be a really beautiful molecule because I'm not somebody who likes to be out of sorts," said Lathrop. "I like to be in control. I don't like to get drunk and I don't like to get super high. CBD gives you a clear head, it relaxes you, it calms you, it's mellow, it helps with pain, it's a good anti-inflammatory, and it's a natural cancer preventative as well. It's like broccoli. It's like a health food on top of everything else."

Lena Davidson, marketing manager for botanicaSEATTLE, a cannabis processor in Seattle, said that trying CBD was a revelatory experience for her.

"It has transformed my relationship to cannabis," she said. "A petite drop of CBD oil turned to vapor gives me an immediate sense of physical ease and well being with only the gentlest edge of psychoactivity."

Even some stoners who do smoke a lot of high-THC weed swear by CBD. Carl William Larsson, a line cook at King's Hardware and a smoker of regular pot said that, despite his high tolerance for THC,

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he was a big fan of CBD strains for their more curative properties.

"I smoke recreationally on weekends and at night mostly," he said. "But if I have a headache or I'm just feeling kind of worn down, I'll smoke CBD, especially earlier in the day."

Jeremiah Wilhelm, a budtender at Dockside Sodo who smokes plenty of THC-rich weed, was similarly enthused about CBD as a headache remedy, albeit for a more specific kind of headache.

"For hangovers, it's a fucking godsend," he said.

"Or if you get too high or if you binge-ate the night before. It lives in the weed ecosystem in a very complementary way [to THC products]."

Lathrop said, "The CBD basically counteracts the THC side effects—getting high, and secondary to that, anxiousness, paranoia, or whatever," he said. "With a balanced CBD weed, you won't get as high. It's a nice buzz and you won't get whacked-out."

Zachary Iszard, chief chemist at Redmond pot lab Confidence Analytics, concurred. "CBD fights both in short-term and in long-term many of the negative side effects that are normally associated with THC," he said. "Cognitive impairments related to short-term memory and spatial reasoning. It eliminates anxiety and mitigates depression. It does all these sorts of things when it is present in recreational weed. It's almost like CBD is weed vitamins!"

Informed of my own issues with anxiety, Lathrop said, "For you, CBD would be a magical molecule."

Here's the bad news: Low-THC, high-CBD marijuana isn't terribly common. Most of the consumers who would benefit from it don't even know what to ask for. Most people still think that the more THC weed has, the better weed it is. Even budtenders who are asked for a relaxing weed still aren't very well acquainted with high-CBD weed.

This is because most of the pot on store shelves is bred to do one thing: get you higher than a kite. Super-high-THC strains are coveted above all, and since that's what sells, many stores won't even bother looking at anything that tests under 20 percent. Many growers, seeking to make as much money as they can in a highly taxed new industry, want to grow the weed the stores want and customers say they want. Recreational consumers have been trained by the black market and years of weed culture to seek out the most potent, mind-melting pot possible.

Because we know so little about the myriad other cannabinoids in pot, THC numbers have taken top

Low-THC, high-CBD marijuana isn't terribly common. Even budtenders who are asked for a relaxing weed still aren't very well acquainted with high-CBD weed.



SOLSTICE CANNABIS *“CBD is not a fully understood component of cannabis at this point,” says Alex Cooley, on the right. “As people become more educated on it and engage with it and experience it more, I wholeheartedly believe it would become a larger segment of the marketplace.”*

billing. Lathrop pointed out that THC and CBD are the only cannabinoid molecules we even test for, out of more than 100 different ones. There’s a lot more going on in there.

Lauren Downes, who manages Ponder, a new pot shop in the Central District, pointed out that it’s not just THC that has an impact on how high you get. She said that without the aid of terpenes, the molecules responsible for the distinct aromas of pot, THC itself wasn’t all that jazzy.

“Terpenes are the true magicians when it comes to getting high from cannabis,” she said. “THC itself is energetic and cerebral. It is only in conjunction with terpenes that you begin to feel the variety of effects. For example, limonene is what is responsible for citrus smelling strains. It actually thins the blood brain barrier and enables your body to absorb more terpenes and more THC, thus producing a stronger high.”

Nick Mosely, one of Confidence Analytics’ co-founders, agreed that the ratios of “cannabinoids to terpenes” are as important as the ratios of THC to CBD. “This is not a single molecule drug, this is a very complex drug,” he said.

Lathrop said that breeding strains to get the high-

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est possible THC definitely comes at the expense of diversity: There are so many different kinds of plants out there that are all being bred for one cannabinoid, the one that gets you as whacked-out as possible—THC—which means we’re potentially missing other chemical combinations that would have different effects. “One of the interesting things about the plant is that it has only so much energy that can go into producing cannabinoids,” he said. “That basically tops out at about 20 to 25 percent. After that, it can’t really make any more cannabinoids. What we’ve done with the street strains, just by economics, is we’ve washed out all of these other cannabinoids.” As a medical student, he’s particularly curious about those other cannabinoids, which is why he’s studying them—because there’s still so much we don’t know.

“If you push that THC to that 20 percent and beyond, you’ve lost all the other cannabinoids,” he said, including CBD. “When you’re like, ‘That’s got only 12 percent THC,’ it’s probably got other cannabinoids in there that haven’t been washed out. They’re not tested for; they’re not on the label, but that’s what you’re paying for. You’re paying for this whole product, not just the THC.”

Despite the ostensible benefits one misses out on when you go for a 25 percent THC strain, we don’t seem to know enough about what we’re missing to even miss it.

“CBD is not a fully understood component of cannabis at this point, especially CBD and THC consumed together,” said Alex Cooley, who owns Solstice Cannabis, a grow in Sodo. “As people become more educated on it and engage with it and experience it more, I wholeheartedly believe that it would become a larger segment of the marketplace.”

However, that’s still a long way off, as things stand. Stoners have been trained for years to get the most bang for their buck, and, as far as they’ve ever known, THC is that bang. Thus, it continues to be the deciding factor for many.

“Without a doubt, easily 80 percent of the people who come through the door are looking for the hottest, newest, dankest weed you can get,” said Wilhelm, the budtender at recreational store Dockside. While it may turn heads in the medical marijuana world, CBD is no one’s darling in the recreational market.

The consumer fetishization of THC has lots of consequences. A recent analysis of publicly available testing data by Dr. Jim MacRae, of Straight Line Analytics, noted that the cannabis testing labs that consistently returned the highest THC results were most popular with growers, suggesting a financial incentive for labs to nudge their THC numbers. This led to the formation of new industry group, the Washington Cannabis Lab Association, that will enable labs to double check one another’s work, ensuring that everyone plays by the same rules.

Meanwhile, there’s an artificial supply-side deficit of high-CBD pot. Because THC-rich weed is so sought after, it takes the lion’s share of the state’s

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THE CLONE ROOM AT LIFE GARDENS *Those baby plants are a multitude of strains, each individually labeled. That's genetic director Michael Safley in the upper center; site director Matt Begni at right, and administrative director Rachael Lowatchie at bottom.*

canopy space. Cooley, of Solstice Cannabis, said that, while he's a huge fan of high-CBD pot, the market for it isn't there. Plenty of growers grow great high-CBD stuff—Cooley noted that many CBD strains grow “like a weed”—but it isn't exactly their cash crop.

“We'll harvest 20 pounds of [high-THC pot], and it'll be sold in a day. Whereas we'll harvest 20 pounds of Sour Tsunami, and it'll be sold in eight weeks,” said Cooley. “That's the Washington market.”

April Roth, the store manager of Uncle Ike's, confirmed that low-THC weed was hard to move. “Recently, one of my top vendors had some beautiful weed that tested at 11 percent THC,” she said. “It's so pretty, I took pictures of it. And it's as great to smoke as it is to look at—but if I hadn't put it out at a lower price than comparable, higher-testing strains from the same vendor, it would have sat on the shelf for a long time.”

Life Gardens devotes only about a tenth of its canopy to such strains. Lowatchie, their administrative director, said, referring to retailers, “Even if we happen to have a coveted strain, if it's not high-THC, they're not interested.”

Life Gardens still grows high-CBD strains, said site

director Matt Begni, because it's not any more difficult or expensive to grow than regular high-THC strains, but they don't grow more than the market can bear.

“We don't lose money on it, because usually retailers that do like CBD come along and buy it all,” he said.

Because of the low demand for high-CBD stuff in recreational stores, growers tend to minimize those strains in favor of big-ticket (i.e., higher-THC) varieties, leaving even those CBD-interested retailers that Begni sells to in the lurch at times. While there is a significant amount of high-CBD weed out there, it's not exactly an endless supply.

After Lathrop and I chatted about the benefits of high-CBD pot in his office at Cannabis City, we went downstairs to find an evenly balanced THC to CBD strain he'd been recommending. They were out. They were also out of Life Gardens' high-CBD stuff. In fact, they were down to just one high-CBD strain.

While most recreational stores carry at least one high-CBD product these days, and many places strive to carry more, it's still an afterthought.

Many budtenders, when faced with a customer complaining of weed-induced anxiety, don't even think to rec-

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ommend high-CBD strains as an alternative.

"I would say it's based on the environment," said Wilhelm, the Dockside budtender. "You have places that are more turn and burn, trying to do volume. People might not be as educated on the effectiveness of CBD because they don't use it, and they're just like, 'You wanna relax? Indica.' I can see the mental connection they make, but it's not correct."

If certainly isn't. If you're one of the unlucky few who doesn't react well to THC, a high dose of it can send your mind racing and set your heart rate on overdrive.

As Wilhelm put it, "It's like putting rocket fuel in a Datsun. You're going to go from 0 to 300 miles per hour, especially if you're more prone to anxiety."

Or as Iszard, the chemist, aptly put it, smoking pot that's all THC can be like "stabbing yourself in the third eye."

Lathrop, despite his temporary lack of inventory, said that, as a medical professional, educating consumers (and his own budtenders) about CBD was a high priority for him.

"Quality is not based on THC, neither is potency," said Downes, from the pot shop Ponder. "We have high-CBD and low-THC products in every category, and we buy based on quality, not THC. In fact, we really try not to purchase products with unrealistically inflated THC numbers."

While Lathrop, Wilhelm, and Downes are clear proof that low-THC strains have some advocates in the recreational retail sector, knowledge and inventory continue to be in short supply. Sadly, the hegemony of high-THC pot means that alternative options are often left off the table entirely.

So what can we do about it?

Well, growers could plant significantly more CBD crops, retailers could start asking for more CBD products at wholesale, and budtenders could make it a more regular recommendation. But it ultimately falls to the consumer. Money talks, and we're the ones spending.

Buying pot based on the outdated method of "highest THC for the lowest price" discourages growers from experimenting with new strains, encourages shady lab testing practices, and robs many of us of what could be a very positive experience with pot.

Ironically, it could be the least snobby potheads who bring about a change in the recreational market, by eschewing the "hottest, newest, and dank-est" for some good ol' dad weed. For your own sake and the industry's, all of you anxiety-ridden, "tried it once and hated it" types should really give high-CBD pot a chance. I did, and I couldn't be happier. ■

"Quality is not based on THC, neither is potency," said Lauren Downes, manager of the new Central District pot shop Ponder. "We buy based on quality, not THC."

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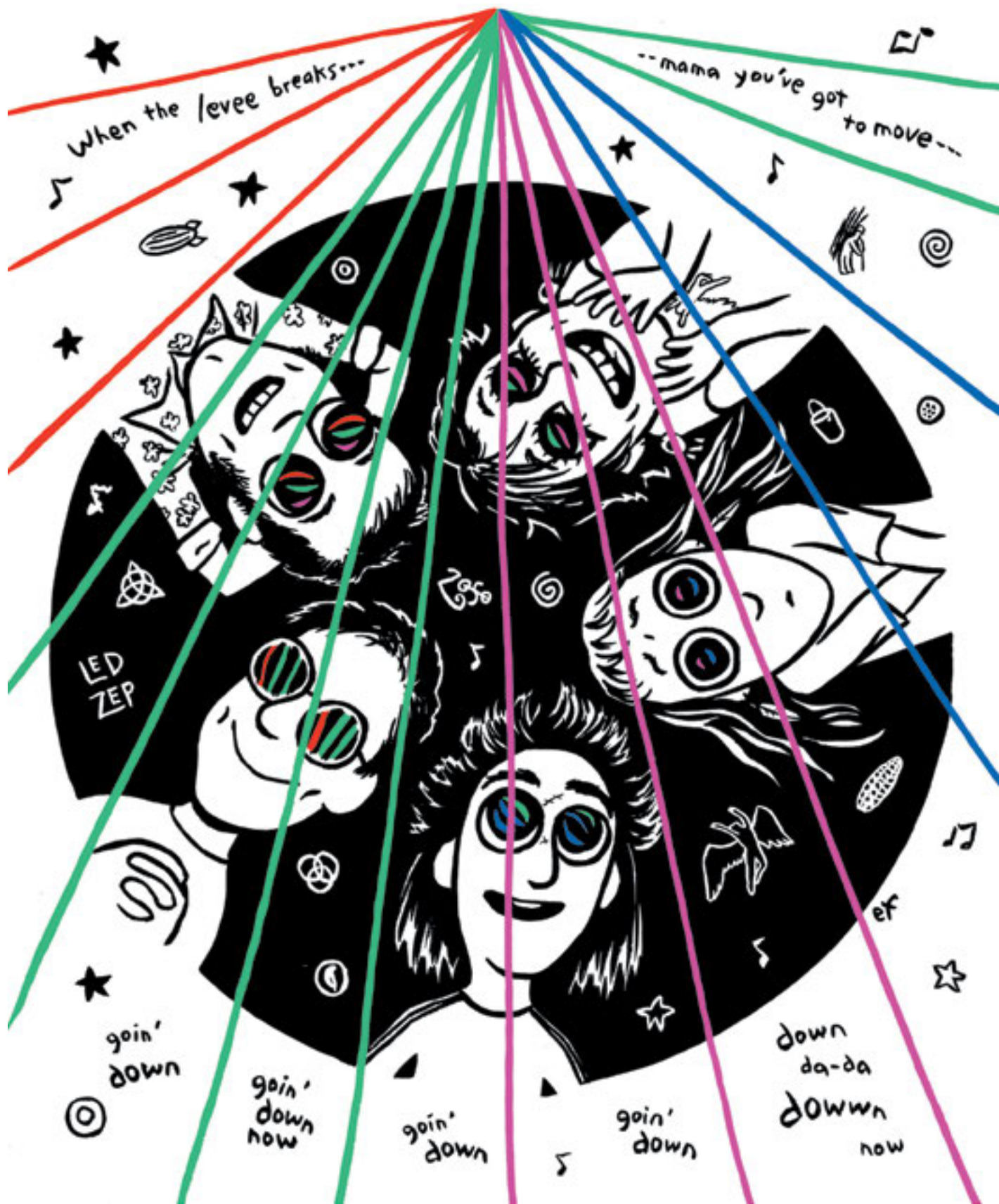


Illustration by **ELLEN FORNEY**

THE TIME I ATE A POT BROWNIE AND WENT TO THE LASER DOME

It Was Laser Zeppelin, and I Got So Stoned,
I Ended Up Crawling Around on My Hands and Knees and
Almost Peed in the Pacific Science Center Fountain

BY KELLY O

I'm probably not alone when I say the most stoned I've ever been in my entire life was because of an edible. I mean, more than a decade ago, when your semiprofessional stoner friend made weed butter at home, it seemed *impossible* to know how many milligrams of THC was ever really in the mix.



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Of course, any friend *should* (and in my case, absolutely *did*) tell you to be careful—to start out eating only a small amount. But you know what? No one is the boss of me!!! NOT EVEN ME! Especially not 15 years ago, when I was young. Nope, I’m still the one who can’t go to a buffet without dirtying five plates—still the overzealous ding-dong who buys a MEDIUM-size movie theater popcorn even though it’s 12 stupid dollars and has more saturated fat than any human should eat in three days. But I’m passionate. And by passionate, I mean impulsive.

I was definitely feeling impulsive on a sunny afternoon back in 2001 when my neighbor, artist Ellen Forney, proposed a group outing to Pacific Science Center. Ellen, who had just finished a graphic novel called *Monkey Food*, was about to embark on writing a brand-new book called simply *I Love Led Zeppelin*. And *love* Zeppelin she did—Ellen even got a small “LED ZEP” tattoo on one of her teeth (who tattoos a tooth?!). Her love for Zep was paramount, and it made perfect sense for a gaggle of us grown-ass adults to eat pot brownies, jump the number 8 bus, and go down to Seattle Center to see Laser Led Zeppelin. I’d never seen a proper laser show. I’d also never eaten a pot brownie.

“Just eat a quarter of it,” said my semiprofessional stoner friend. I did, but then when I tried to pass the rest of the messy, chocolatey treat to anyone else, they’d already eaten plenty. Without thinking twice, I porky-pigged the rest of the brownie right into my own mouth. OH, THIS WAS GONNA BE FU-UH-UNNNN! And I would surely have the MOST fun, since I ate ALL the brownie! Or so I thought.

I’d never seen a proper laser show. I’d also never eaten a pot brownie.

The brownie started kicking my ass on the bus. One of the people in our party was wearing a cheap black wig that he thought made him look like Nikki Sixx from Mötley Crüe. I decided he was more Joyce DeWitt—you know, Janet from the TV show *Three’s Company*. I started addressing him

as Joyce, which to me was hellishly funny. I couldn’t stop giggling. No one else on the bus even smiled when I repeatedly said, “Hey, JOYYYY-CE!” but then again, no one else ate an ENTIRE homemade pot brownie either.

Laser shows at the Pacific Science Center (which cost less than a medium movie popcorn) are, plain and simple, AWESOME. I’m just going to own my “dork” and admit this. The Laser Dome’s website claims, “At 80 feet in diameter, it’s the largest and longest operating domed laser theater in the world.” IN THE WHOLE WORLD! It’s completely mind-altering weirdness, that room, no matter what music they play, no matter what visuals they project on the ceiling. You can sit in a chair that leans way back, or you can just sprawl out on the floor in front of the chairs. When we made the trip down in 2001 for Led Zeppelin, Ellen, Joyce, I, and the others laid ourselves flat out on the floor and ooh-and-aah’ed at the “world-class laser art” on the ceiling for what seemed like two lifetimes—two long, luxurious and sexy utopian eternities. THEN IT HAPPENED.

I had to pee.

“What do I do?!” I whispered to Joyce.

“You’re gonna have to *feel* your way outta



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An advertisement for Confidence Analytics. It features a cannabis bud on the left, a circular inset showing a chromatogram in the center, and a circular inset showing a lab flask with orange liquid on the right. Lines connect the bud to the chromatogram and the flask. The text "Test with Confidence." is at the top. The Confidence Analytics logo, which includes a stylized 'CA' and "1-502 CERTIFIED", is on the right. Contact information for Confidence Analytics is also provided.

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I wasn't a dog, of course, I was a LADY. A very stoned HUMAN LADY. When I finally crawled headfirst into the thick, velvety blackout curtains, a single tear rolled down my face. Or maybe it was pee trying *anything* to escape my body. I pulled myself up into a standing position, using the glorious curtains. "Oh, the end of thy bladder's nightmare is nigh!" I shouted inside my head in a triumphant and dramatic Shakespearean accent. But it wasn't the end of my nightmare. Instead, this was the moment I would expe-

When I finally found the split in the fabric, I launched my whole body through it, like a

“I’m sorry I ate ALL the brownie, just please don’t make me pee my pants!”

But I thrust myself out the worst possible exit door. Immediately the bright sunlight reminded me of how dark it had been where I just was, and also of how wickedly stoned I was. I covered my eyes, howled, and started

I repeated this 10 times fast and, like a miracle, I looked up again and a puffy white cloud slowly formed into a giant hand, with a finger pointing toward a Seattle Center restroom. I carefully walked, with praying hands still holding back the floodwaters, to my salvation. In the restroom, I promised myself I would try to be a better person if I survived. I hope that I sort of am. I still get a little tingle in my wee parts when I hear Led Zeppelin, though. ■

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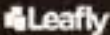
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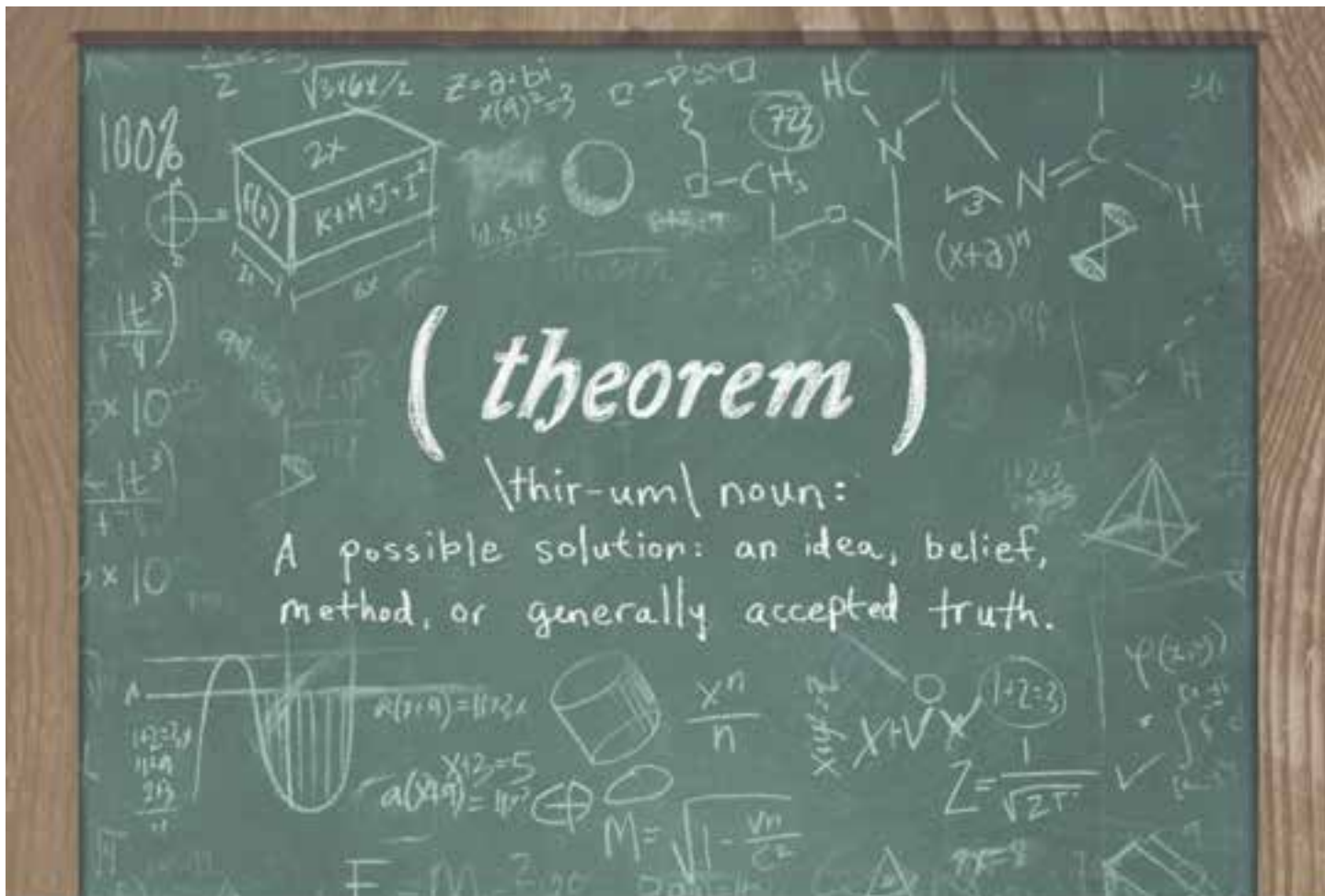


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Shows at the Laser Dome You Can Go See Right Now



BY JULIA RABAN

The laser shows at the Pacific Science Center's Laser Dome are not a series of straight, bright lines of light pulsing to the beat of the music in a thick fog of smoke. They aren't a preprogrammed display that the employees turn on and forget about. They are nothing like the iTunes visualizer.

The spectacle is surprisingly dynamic and creative. From Laser Outkast to Laser Gorillaz to Laser Journey, these live events require the hand of a laser artist at the controls who's watching the show—and gauging crowd reaction as it goes. Shows shift based on the artist and the audience; you're encouraged to clap and cheer for whatever amuses or excites you, helping to guide the visuals the artist decides to use. As for the music, what you're hearing is 15,000 watts of digital sound inside the world's largest and longest-operating domed laser theater—at 80 feet in diameter and 40 years, respectively.

After entering the theater and lying down—the best spots are on the floor, although there are also seats—all that's visible is a gigantic dome ceiling whose surface is made up of thousands of triangles and diamonds in cream-colored fabric. About a minute before the show starts (especially if you're high), the shapes might move just outside your peripheral vision, like an optical illusion. Then the lights go down, you can't see the ceiling anymore, and the dome fills with colors and shapes and patterns.

Each song is its own tiny universe. Each track has individualized aesthetics. Occasionally they'll throw in plot development, recurring characters, and symbolism; the detailed digital animation and sweeping visual effects feel more like a movie than a light show. The way that the theater curves around and encompasses your entire field of vision (side note: wear contacts, not glasses) makes everything outside of the dome impossible and foreign, too far away to comprehend.

Schedule

On Friday and Saturday nights, tickets are \$10.50, and on Thursday, which is “Cheap Date Night,” they're \$7 apiece. The matinees (offered only on weekends) are geared toward people visiting the Pacific Science Center for the day, so la-

ser show entry is lumped in with admission and costs \$22.75. If there's something you can only express in laser writing, displaying a personalized message of 25 characters or less during a public show costs \$50. And you can rent out the dome for private parties and events. ■

Laser Outkast

Thurs at 8 pm

Shake it, as it were, like a Polaroid picture (or, more accurately, lie there motionless like a sessile waster at a laser show on a Thursday night) and enjoy hits by Outkast.

Laser EDM

Thurs at 9:15 pm

Imagine the blinking, moving colors in this EDM concert like “gloving” but on a gigantic scale. It's more impressive (even missing the fancy little finger tricks).

Laser Daft Punk

Fri-Sat at 8 pm

Everybody sing: “I'm on my back to get lasers...” Note: The laser effects will be vastly more enjoyable if you remove your helmet.

Laser Floyd: DSOTM

Fri-Sat at 9:15 pm

If you absolutely insist on listening to *The Dark Side of the Moon*, you should at least have the decency to do it at a laser dome.

Laser Monsters of Rock

Fri-Sat at 10:30 pm

Lie down and jam out to hard rock (like “Crazy Train,” “Dream On,” and “You Shook Me All Night Long”) at the Science Center's newest laser show, which opened April 1.

Laser Floyd: The Wall

Fri-Sat at midnight

One thing you can definitely say about Pink

Floyd's 1979 double concept album: It's moderately more enjoyable than oral surgery (comfortably numb or not), though the double bill with *The Dark Side of the Moon* makes one wonder.

Laser Beatles

Sat-Sun at 12:30 pm

Best music ever made plus lasers. What more do you want, a foot rub?

Laser Michael Jackson

Sat-Sun at 1:15 pm, Sun at 8 pm

Not a hologram from your nightmares but a celebration of MJ's music accompanied by contemporary technology.

Laser Journey: Don't Stop Believing

Sat-Sun at 2:15 pm

Everybody, a wise man once sang, wants a thrill. On weekend afternoons, the movie never ends. Nor does the wheel in the sky stop turning. You see where I'm going with this...

Laser Guardians: Awesome Mix Tape

Sat-Sun at 3:15 pm

In the middle of the afternoon, lie back and soak up the soundtrack to Marvel's hit film *Guardians of the Galaxy*, featuring artists including David Bowie, the Runaways, the Jackson 5, Raspberries, and Blue Swede.

Laser Gorillaz

Sun at 9:15 pm

See Pacific Science Center's laser-filled take on the virtual band Gorillaz (known for their own digital animations) every Sunday night.

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DAVID SCHMADER *There will be movie-theater popcorn at the book's release at the Egyptian on 4/20. And video collages on the big screen.*

David Schmader Wrote a User's Guide for Pot— and It's Perfect

The Author of *Weed: The User's Guide*
Talks About Dabbing, Bongs, Maureen Dowd,
and Melted Cheese



It's easy to forget that weed is a subculture, and a rather inaccessible one for most people. While your Republican grandma in Arizona might *want* to smoke weed now that she can get a medical marijuana card for her arthritis, she probably has no clue how to actually do it,

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how it will feel, what snacks she should buy, or what to put on the tube. Seattle writer David Schmader, who spent a decade and a half at *The Stranger* aggregating the world's worst and weirdest news into a surprisingly uplifting column called Last Days, wrote a book to clue her in. It's called *Weed: The User's Guide*. Buy her this book.

Buy *everyone* this book. The information inside is absolutely indispensable for stoners and novices alike. Schmader tackles all the basics of bud, plus plenty of esoteric but equally important stuff. It's got everything from the ancient history of pot (where he considers the all-important question "Was Jesus a stoner?") to a compound-by-compound breakdown of all the chemicals that make pot pot. While it's extremely useful and educational, it's also just really fun to read, which is no surprise coming from Schmader.

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April 20, Egyptian

**David Schmader
and Friends**

April 22, Town Hall

The Seattle release party happens on 4/20 at SIFF Cinema Egyptian, the movie theater on Capitol Hill, with Schmader's favorite thing to watch high on a screen and every stoner's favorite high snack ever: movie theater popcorn. Schmader will also host a panel discussion at Town Hall

on April 22 to talk pot with a bunch of other brilliant local minds: cartoonist (and light rail station muralist!) Ellen Forney, KEXP DJ Riz Rollins, former city council member Nick Licata, and author/podcaster/sex columnist Dan Savage.

You make not one but two Maureen Dowd jokes in this book. I think it's the solemn duty of anybody who writes about weed to never let her live that down, so... thanks.

Um, yeah, you are very welcome. I feel like she's the victim, though. Like, a new industry should not sell products that make its customers feel like they're already dead. This is a high-functioning, intelligent Pulitzer Prize winner who still had her life seriously disrupted by eating the wrong cookie.

In my life, weed is hardly ever the main character. It's always the supporting character for things I already love.

I felt bad that everyone was saying, "How dumb is she?" She's not dumb, she's Maureen Dowd!

Yeah, if it can happen to her, it can happen to anyone! Clearly they needed better packaging on these things, and we're getting it.

Your book definitely took me back to the good old days, like the section on how to deal with your dealer, where you talk about the awkward ritual of purchasing pot that no one has to go

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through anymore.

Oh, I know! The lost culture, no one is talking about it.

What was the example of something horrible your dealer would force you to watch when you bought weed? Sasquatch documentaries?

That's real. That was a *Stranger* distributor who was a great friend to all of us. He was reliable, but he also would make you watch Sasquatch documentaries to get your weed. He would even make me lay hands on a piece of plaster with a Sasquatch footprint on it. You'd have to go deep.

What is your relationship with pot?

I tried it in high school and I thought, "Oh that's fine." It wasn't until college that I felt like it really hit. I went to a theater conservatory, so there were a lot of smokers. I didn't buy it for myself until I was in my late 20s because I was always around people who would just share it with me. I was such a lightweight, they would give me a little puff and I would buy the chips and that would be fine.

In college, it was really about "Wow, this changes things. It can really enhance the experiences I already love." Then I kind of gave it up when I was leaving college behind. Then at the end of my 20s, I thought, "Hey, let's try this again," and it was like, "This does a lot of things I really like, reliably."

What kinds of things does it enhance for you?

Once I figured out the right dosage (which was lighter than what a lot of my friends enjoyed), I learned that weed enhanced pretty much all sensory experience. My first mind-blowing experience involved melted cheese, and my second involved listening to music (the Velvet Underground's third record was a big one for me). It felt like weed called me into the present and allowed me to engage with art in a deeper and certainly easier way than just calling myself into the present. After melted cheese and the Velvet Underground, key early weed experiences involved Indian food, *History of Art* college textbooks, Robert Altman films, and what I call Socratic comedies—movies that act dumb to show they're smart, like *Clueless* and *Romy and Michele's High School Reunion*. Ultimate area of enhancement: kissing and everything after.

Are you a daily partaker?

It's pretty close to every day. I'm in a marriage where we both are like, "Hey remember that crutch we both love that's reliable and hasn't ruined our lives?" It's definitely a crutch—but what a beautiful crutch!

What else has weed done for you?

My relationship to weed has helped me get some empathy. I married into a Mormon family. At the end of the day, I like to have a puff and contextualize my thoughts a little bit. And other people like to sit in church for three hours on Sunday and be told what to do. And let's not judge each other! We each have



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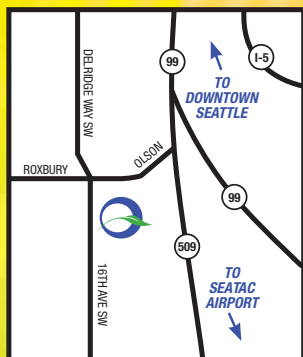
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What do you think of the so-called "green rush," where pot is becoming a big money game? Your book was very much a throwback to classic stoner culture and the underground economy of it. And now weed is becoming less of a culture and more of an industry.

I'm a medical user—like, officially—so I still go to dispensaries. I haven't had much experience with the recreational pot shops. But we get these exported facts about how oppressively Caucasian [commercial pot] is and how oppressively non-Caucasian drug sentencing is, and it makes you feel gross. That's definitely a part of the popular conversation: "How do we make this a really guilt-free pleasure?" We've taken the prohibition away from it in parts of the country, but there's still this gross residue of the inequality of prosecution and opportunity.

It's still pretty uncomfortable to go to a recreational store and think about that.

Especially when it's right where the prohibition dealers used to stand and risk their lives and futures. It's kind of knife-twisty. And as for the medical side, they're like, "Oh, how dare they institute these changes!?" But if you call something medicine, eventually you're going to get pharmacy rules. You won! But now you have to internalize [the rules] and have carpeting and have hours and... yeah.

What's your favorite weird product out there, now that we have everything?

I haven't tried it yet, but I'm so thrilled it exists: It's a topical roll-on, like deodorant, but earlier topicals went no deeper than the skin and offered no pleasurable effects beyond the site-specific diminishment of pain. But the new topicals reach all the way into your bloodstream, making it possible to get high by just rubbing something on your skin. No ingestion, no inhalation. The brand I've seen is from Mary's Medicinals.

Like the weed patch? Where you just put a little patch on your skin?

Yeah, it's like the patch! They finally figured out how to get it into your bloodstream. The previous topical I had was all about muscle relief, and it didn't have anything to do with your bloodstream.

Where do you stand on people naming their bongs?

Naming their bongs? That's a little outer edge for me. I'm a dog lover, but I don't call them "fur babies." It's just, "I love dogs." Same with bongs. I don't need to personalize my bong. I like a bong that does its job; it doesn't need a name. Its name is "Bong."

What about dabs? Do you dab?

No! My only experience is being served a dab. I've never tried home dabbing because it feels way too much like hot knives. It seems very retro. But

the effect of a dab is like the tequila shot of weed, it's pretty amazing. I like the feeling, but the open flame seems... there's something about both crack and heroin using open flames that gives me a bit of an icky feeling about having a personal flamethrower around my leisure drug.

They could make it look a little bit less like something you do in the alley behind the Crocodile.

I'm sure they will. I'm sure there will be some amazing Mr. Coffee revolution in the dab world where it's like this, "The heating element touches this and you don't even have to be there!" But right now, it still feels a little like "I'm tyin' off my arm!"

What's your favorite weird strain name?

I don't really have strain favorites. I'm boring. Sativa when the sun shines and indica in the evening. But I've never really attached super closely to a strain. I guess Blue Dream is a recurring thing.

So you're not swayed by somebody being like, "This is the most amazing Gorilla Blue Cheese Couch Glue"?

If the price is right, I'll try it. If the price is like caviar, I'll be like, "That's cute, see ya later."

What's your favorite thing to do while you're stoned other than narrating *Showgirls*?

Ooh! That's a good segue into the book-release party at the Egyptian. It's on 4/20 and Collide-O-Scope asked me, "What do you want to do for your high party?" Well, my favorite thing to do, which is watch Collide-O-Scope. They're kind of video collage makers. It's just like freaky things and it really exploits that associative thinking that weed brings. Where you're like, "You don't need to tell me why this connects to that—I feel why!" The idea was to have one event for people who are really high and have one event that's culturally about weed and would be enjoyable and enlightening for people who are not (necessarily) high. The Collide-O-Scope one is the fun-for-high-people one! The second event is at Town Hall on Friday, April 22, and features me, Dan Savage, Riz Rollins, Ellen Forney, and Nick Licata.

Video collages are the best thing for high eyes. I love that you called out *TV Carnage* in the book.

You can delight high people by just showing them things that they would appreciate that have nothing to do with weed. That's a big part of the book. In my life, weed is hardly ever the main character. It's always the supporting character for things I already love.

I find the funniest thing about so-called "stoner culture" is that so much time is spent focusing on weed itself, instead of doing fun shit while you're high.

Yeah, I love smoking weed and living my normal life. I don't love smoking weed and talking about weed. It's worse than talking about Sasquatch! ■

Interview by TOBIAS COUGHLIN-BOGUE

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THREE MILITARY VETERANS EXPLAIN WHAT WEED DOES FOR THEIR PTSD

**These Washington State Vets Who Use Cannabis
Talk About How It's Saved Lives—Specifically, Theirs**

BY TOBIAS COUGHLIN-BOGUE

Twenty-two veterans a day commit suicide in the United States. Why anyone commits suicide is something only they can know, ultimately, but it wouldn't be a stretch to surmise that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) might have something to do with it.

The US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health system is quick to prescribe anti-anxiety drugs, antidepressants, sedatives, and other meds for PTSD, but that hasn't done much to stem the tide of veteran suicides. Cannabis, despite promising results for many vets who are dealing with PTSD, is off the table. Possession of weed is still a federal crime, and the VA is a federal agency. However, veterans across the country are speaking up in favor of pot, saying that it's succeeded where pharmaceutical meds have failed.

In California, there's a medical marijuana cooperative called Santa Cruz Veterans Alliance that distributes free pot to veterans. The group has about 200 members. Here in Washington State, a medical cannabis dispensary in

Olympia that caters specifically to veterans, Rainier Xpress (rX), does something similar. Patrick Seifert, who runs rX, says he gives out about an eighth of weed a month to his patients free of charge. He says he's worked with more than 3,000 patients.

A widely syndicated Associated Press story recently documented the rise of pot use among veterans nationwide, even in states where it is illegal. As the story noted, while weed is increasingly popular with vets as a PTSD treatment, there is scant scientific evidence to support it.

Before allowing vets to use medical marijuana, the VA would probably need to see randomized, controlled studies. Obviously, cannabis has been illegal for quite some time,

and so those studies couldn't happen. But two such studies are currently under way in Colorado, and the international scientific community has also been active on the issue. Studies by Dr. Raphael Mechoulam, a prominent Israeli cannabis researcher, have shown that the body's endocannabinoid system plays a major role in fear regulation and memory retention, and that cannabis seems to have some positive effect on PTSD. The research is by no means definitive, but it would seem to suggest that the self-medicating many veterans have been doing is not misguided.

Many veterans are still denied access to pot. Those who are lucky enough to live in a state where medical marijuana is legal and where PTSD is an approved condition can try it, but only about half the states with medical marijuana programs allow its use for PTSD.

Washington State didn't allow the use of medical marijuana for PTSD until recently, and it took plenty of campaigning to get that accomplished. Seifert, of rX, also founded a nationwide organization called Twenty2Many, created to call attention to the staggering rate of veteran suicides in America and the potential to use cannabis as a solution. In 2015, the group campaigned loudly for PTSD to be add-

The VA is quick to prescribe antianxiety drugs, antidepressants, sedatives, and other meds for PTSD, but that hasn't done much to stem the tide of veteran suicides.



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I spoke with three veterans in Washington State who are similarly enthusiastic about medical cannabis. To illustrate how effective pot has been for them, these three vets were willing to share their very personal and often dark stories about living with PTSD. Of cannabis, each one said, unprompted and independently, "It saved my life."

Though they had no qualms about *The Stranger* publishing their full names in this article, they're still former federal employees, and they still depend on the federal government for benefits, so we have decided to publish only their first names.

Kevin

Kevin grew up in the Northwest, Snohomish specifically. He was a bit of a wild one, he said, and while he didn't have a record, he had a reputation. After years of gangs, drugs, and crime, he decided to go straight.

"I was headed for an early grave or a prison cell," he said. He decided to do a complete one-eighty and pursue a career in law enforcement. However, his reputation caught up to

him. About a year and a half into criminology courses at a community college, he took a class taught by a local detective who was well acquainted with his past. That, he said, was the end of that. His career in law enforcement dead in the water, he joined the army. After partying his face off all summer, he shipped off to basic training in the fall of 1998.

A few sleepy years of peacetime passed, and then 9/11 hit, and his world got crazy. He said he was extremely gung ho about combat. He signed up to be combat infantry despite the 200-plus other jobs available to him because, as he told the recruiter, "I wanna blow shit up and get paid for it."

And indeed he did, as part of a route clearance and IED-defusing unit in Iraq. Iraq, he said, was great.

"IEDs were kicking everybody's fucking ass at that time," he said. "We wrote the book on it. Now they have a handy-dandy wood-chuck guidebook for how not to get blown the fuck up. That was one of the highlights of my career. It was a good tour; we were taken care of. General Milley, the current army chief of staff, was our brigade commander. He took great care of us. We were his only route planners and counter-IED asset."

After his time sussing out car bombs in

Sadr City, he came home and then quickly re-deployed to Afghanistan. That, he said, was a much less pleasant experience.

"It was a forgotten war," he said. "There were people in uniform [here in the United States] that didn't even know we were over there."

He complained of a severe lack of organization, saying that in contrast to Iraq, he felt like he was flying by the seat of his pants with no direction.

"I was a young E6 in charge of it all," Kevin said. "It was quite the responsibility. Millions of dollars of equipment, 20 to 30 lives at any given time. And we were known as a high-value target because of what we did."

However, he didn't lose a single one of those lives. "Everybody came home with all their shit intact," he told me. "Don't even ask me how."

"That's one of the burdens I don't carry," he said, referring to service members who've lost comrades. The sheer intensity of the mission, however, was enough to give him the PTSD that has plagued him since returning home.

"Here's the rub on that," he said. "When you're wired that tight, and you know the stakes every single minute of every single day

of every single mission, you don't ever come back from that. I got back in 2007, but I never really came back. I'm still on patrol every single minute of every single day."

His return home was less of a graceful reen-try and more of a crash landing.

"I dove into a fuckin' bottle, man," he said. "I'm a recovering alcoholic. I'm one of the worst fucking drunks there ever was."

At some point while he was working at Fort Bragg, he went on a bender, and a couple of officers had to track him down at a cheap hotel, where he was holed up with a couple of hired "friends" and the remainder of an ounce of blow.

"I don't remember any of it," he said. "What drives a man there?"

His commander was planning to give him a dishonorable discharge, but stripped him of his rank instead. Over the next couple of years, Kevin worked his way back up in rank. However, his high performance came at a price.

"I was already on a steady regimen of pills," he said. "Between 2007 and 2012, I was addicted to prescription amphetamines. You don't put in 100 hours a week in the battalion F-3 shop on coffee. I was cut off of that after I left Fort Bragg and went to Fort Polk, and I rapidly went downhill."

After his reassignment, he couldn't get speed anymore, as he'd switched doctors and his issues with substance abuse raised eyebrows with his new health-care provider. Faced with withdrawal, he said, his alcoholism deepened.

"All I had was alcohol," he told me. "I drank

"You tack on the seven different pills three times a day, and the side effects from all of those, and it makes you wish you were fucking dead."

Pot, which ultimately came to replace the pills and booze, first came back into his life on leave.

"When you're wired that tight, and you know the stakes every single minute of every single day of every single mission, you don't ever come back from that."

because I couldn't stand being in my own skin. The more I felt like that, the more I drank, and the more I felt like that."

His drinking, he said, was the only way he had to cope with symptoms of his PTSD, the only way he could unwind after being wired so tight. But, he said, he was coming unwound.

"It's a fucking death sentence," he said.

"Any time I could take an extended period of leave, two weeks or more, I could always go get a bag of reefer," he said. "I knew from the first time I did it, that was gonna be my shit."

"It has its pluses and minuses," he admitted, but said it was preferable to the alternative. "When you're as heavily medicated as



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I was, the side effects from all the pills [are worse]. I was in my mid-30s having to kick fucking Viagra. I was fat and lazy. It was the pills.”

Now, he said, he goes to Alcoholics Anonymous five days a week and uses pot instead of booze to help cope. At some point, he went into the VA and informed them that he was done with pharmaceuticals and would be smoking medical cannabis from there on out.

“I’m on this regimen of pills [that I hate], and now I’m in a state where cannabis is legal and I’m going to pursue that,” he told his psychiatrist. “Matter of fact, it’s growing al-

ready.”

They offered no comment, he said, just advice on how to safely detox from his prescriptions. That process was difficult, and he recalled one particularly tough episode where he got into a fender bender on I-5.

His anger took over and he got out of his car ready, he said, to beat the other driver to death on the side of the freeway. He didn’t, thankfully, but that episode nearly scared him into going back on his medications. Nearly.

“It wasn’t me; it was the pills,” he said. He stuck with pot, and he credits it for turning his life around. Weed helps him calm down with-

out the side effects other prescriptions have, he said. It also helps him stay off the sauce. If not for pot, he said, he’d be dead.

“If you put that bottle in my hand, I’d be dead, I’d be dead by the end of the weekend.”

Now he grows his own high-CBD cannabis at home—he said he can’t find enough through the recreational stores—and the pain relief it affords him allows him to get out and exercise, which further helps his mood. CBD has also been shown to be anxiolytic, meaning it reduces anxiety. Kevin freely admitted to his issues with anger and the potential to be a danger to himself or others. But weed helped him cope with that anger where prescription drugs hadn’t.

“After four years [of cannabis], you wouldn’t catch me in a doctor’s office asking for a scrip for something to make me feel good,” he said. “I know exactly who and what I am. That’s the whole moral of the story. If I’ve got to be on something to regulate my mood and behavior for the rest of my life, this is going to be it.”

Justin

Justin, who was a helicopter pilot in Iraq and elsewhere, had an eerily similar story. After

Weed helps him calm down without the side effects other prescriptions have. It also helps him stay off the sauce.

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flying in and out of combat zones and being constantly on alert, he found he couldn't turn it off when he got home.

"Basically, you get to this point where you're able to process everything so fast," he said. "You have half a second to react, technically a third. A third of a second to even process. That's how I know how to operate." Going through civilian life in a state of constant danger awareness was unbearable, he said. He had all the classic symptoms of PTSD: nightmares, insomnia, aggression, etc.

The VA's answer was pills.

"They just give you meds, and you take 'em and you take 'em and you take 'em, and if shit starts going bad, you just keep taking 'em," he said. "You get angry, angry, angry, and you just keep taking meds, and you go, 'Why am I angry?' Because you're taking meds."

The side effects and the negative interactions of the drugs he was on, he said, were making his life a living hell. At one point, he got serotonin syndrome, suffering constant and uncontrollable muscle spasms. When he would take all the pills he was supposed to, it would wreak havoc on his bowels, sending him to the bathroom hourly for periods as long as 13 hours.

He lost 60 pounds in a summer because he

was afraid to eat and found himself completely devoid of energy. One medication made him feel overwhelmed with depression, he said, like he was drowning all the time. He failed out of college thanks to Prazosin, a medication that prevents PTSD-induced nightmares, because the drug would leave him stuck in bed for three hours every morning, he said. The medication suppresses adrenalin spikes, and while he would wake up at a normal time, whatever it did to suppress those spikes left him completely without motivation. Though he wanted to, he simply couldn't make himself get out of bed.

On his initial cocktail of VA medications, he said, "The difference between a good day and a bad day is like skating on thin ice. Above the surface is the reality of suicide. It happens all around, got it, people die, people choose. Then right beneath that ice, you're instantly going, 'Suicide, suicide, suicide.' That's real, versus the idea. That's how thin you are, whether you slip, fall, crack, or whatever. That was my medication."

Despite admitting to having suicidal thoughts, he said, the VA kept giving him more meds.

"Fuck, you trust me with all this?" he said to the VA, incredulously. "I just told you I

tried to kill myself a couple weeks ago. I put a gun to my head at 7:08 in the morning because I couldn't take it anymore, and then you give me more?"

During his darkest times, when his cocktail of medications made death seem pretty peachy, he leaned on weed.

"I was already smoking pretty hardcore at that point," he said. "That was the only thing that kept it all together. I was having a crisis."

To get out of that crisis, Justin said, "I stopped drinking. I would drink a fifth of Black Label. It helped me pass out, and it helped me forget. I was trying to drown that shit. I had to [get off the pills]. Had I continued taking those things, I would have killed myself. I stopped and smoked weed."

Weed helped him slow down without the intense side effects of the other medications and the booze, he said.

He also decided to take a more active role in his medical regimen.

"Now I'm on Cymbalta" and a few other meds that work better together, he said. "I took control of my shit, and that got me going."

Despite his new meds, he knows PTSD is something he will live with forever. He doesn't see weed as a replacement for his medication, but he does see it as a vital supplement to it.

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Where to Go for What to Do



"Now I've found a good spot [with medication], but still there are certain things you can't deal with," he said. "You're used to working at 90 percent. Your anxiety level is up here, because there are people trying to kill you. You get so caught up in that, and life becomes just that—so when you come back home, you're still at 90 percent when the entire world is at 9 percent."

That transition from combat back to civilian life is the root of the problem, he said.

"That is where 22 veterans die a day," he said. "Nearly once an hour, you have a veteran dying. Whether you have a veteran or a person, it's shitty regardless, but these people fought for our country."

Though he didn't think weed was a miracle cure by any means, he said that it was an especially great way to help vets manage the sudden transition back to civilian life, in addition to its PTSD-related benefits.

"We need to slow down," he said. "No one teaches that." He added that he "unearthed 50 gallons of topsoil yesterday. I weeded 400 square feet of grass. Some Zen shit. Now I take the time to understand and process. It slows us down."

Thanks to pot, he said, "I'm able to be a person. I'm able to transition, to live a life in

"I have guys who look up to me, guys who I've stopped from killing themselves. If I wasn't smoking weed, if I was drinking—are you kidding me? Weed saved my life."

Seattle. I'm employed full-time. I'm gunning toward a promotion. I have guys who look up to me, guys who I've gotten jobs for, guys who I've stopped from killing themselves. If I wasn't smoking weed, if I was drinking—are you kidding me? Weed saved my life and a bunch of others too."

Andrew

Andrew did six years of active duty in the army. His first three were with the 82nd Airborne, including a 30-day stint in New Orleans dealing with the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

"I saw some things here in the United States that I ultimately ended up seeing in Iraq," he said. Though he doesn't specify


what those things were, it's not hard to tell from his tone that he didn't exactly cherish the memory.

On his first tour, he lost six comrades. After his deployment in Iraq and the end of that tour, he reenlisted with a support and reconnaissance unit at Fort Lewis, getting out in 2010. After the army, he headed to Wyoming to go to school.

"I was fine for a while," he said. "The first six months, I didn't notice anything unusual. I was getting 4.0s in school, things were good."

But then PTSD started gradually creeping in. All the symptoms of PTSD were there, though he hadn't identified them yet.

"It was a lot of sleeplessness, a lot of anger," he said. "I wasn't leaving my house; I started isolating a lot."



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To cope with the symptoms, he said, “I started drinking a lot more just to sleep at night. Sometimes I would drink two fifths of whiskey and half a 12 pack just to be able to get a couple hours of sleep. I’d crawl into the bathtub with a .45 and a bottle of whiskey. I started really pulling away, withdrawing from society. I knew I needed help, so I went to the VA in spring of 2012.”

There, he had a brief conversation with brusque doctor who couldn’t be bothered to set down his keys or cell phone during the interview, he said. After five minutes and three questions, he had a diagnosis, and with the diagnosis came pills—lots of them.

The pills helped at first, he said, but he was still drinking and still having problems. His hands would shake uncontrollably. Whether it was the booze or the trauma is anyone’s guess, but he knew something was wrong. He was enrolled in psychology classes at the time, and he began identifying some of the classic symptoms of PTSD in himself. PTSD

kicking booze.

“I don’t know if that was what switched [for me], but I stopped drinking,” he said. “Not like immediately, but I started being more aware of it, stopped with the hard alcohol.” However, there were still the pills.

“I was still really dependent,” Andrew said. “I was still in the VA’s system. At one point, they had me on 17 [pharmaceuticals] a day. That was benzos, SSRIs, narcotics—you name it, and I more or less have taken it.”

They kept trying different medications, he said, but nothing was working for him. When he was 27, the VA came to him and asked, essentially, “What more do you want from us?” He’d taken every different type of trauma and anger-management class available, and tried nearly every pharmaceutical out there, to no avail.

“I don’t know,” he told the VA in response. “The system is obviously broken, but I don’t know what’s wrong.”

“That was the lightbulb,” he said. “I real-

the two interactions are seizures and death for venlafaxine and tramadol. I was taking 325 milligrams of venlafaxine and they had given me a high dose of tramadol. It would have looked like an accidental death.”

As he summed it up: “I was a problem child. Nothing they were giving me was working, so they sent me to an outpatient clinic that was closer to my house, and then they give me an accidental death cocktail, basically.”

Thankfully, in 2013, he made his way to Washington State and found Rainier Xpress, Patrick Seifert’s dispensary. Discovering the medical potential of cannabis was a game changer for him.

“I met Patrick, and they started introducing me at first into flower strains,” he said. “Strains that were specifically grown for PTSD, like Nigerian Sunshine. I knew about CBDs just through my own research. I love books and I love research, so I started doing a lot of research and I kind of had an idea of what I wanted to do. With their help, they really helped me pinpoint it.”

Weed also served as an effective substitute for booze. Considering that he was diagnosed with preliminary liver failure at 27, kicking pills and booze clearly was a lifesaving move. When he wanted to drink a beer, he said, he smoked a joint. If he craved a shot of whiskey, he’d do a dab. Some people said he was simply replacing one substance-abuse problem with another, but he rejects that idea.

“At the end of the day, the thing that I like to tell them is, ‘What’s the difference between me being hooked on the VA’s drugs for the rest of my life or me being on something that’s at least going to let me live?’” On weed, he said, he was able to finish his bachelor’s degree within four years.

“I don’t think I would have been able to do it without cannabis,” he said. “If I continued down the path I was on in Wyoming with all the alcohol and stuff they had me on, I don’t think I would have been able to finish school.”

Or stay alive, he added.

He would have been dead “either by my own hands or by [the VA’s] hands,” he said. While he still has his bad days, where he cloisters himself at home and medicates all day, he has plenty more good ones.

“It’s the cannabis,” Andrew said. It has given him a drive and energy he hadn’t previously thought possible. “For me, it’s changed my life.”

Asked about the VA’s stance on treating PTSD with pot, he didn’t mince words.

“For them to say that this is not medicine is absurd.” ■

“I ultimately did try to take my life three times,” he said calmly. “I don’t think I would have been able to do it”—stay alive, finish school—“without cannabis.”

had not been his diagnosis. Besides the lack of sleep, he was having intense anger outbursts and found himself in a constant state of hyperawareness.

At that point, he said, he was also using cannabis, but purely recreationally.

“I had a cocktail at that point,” he said. “I was using alcohol, cannabis, and the VA’s pharmaceuticals all at once. It was just kind of a roller coaster.” That cocktail was nearly his undoing.

“I ultimately did try to take my life three times,” he said calmly. “The third time, I was just like—I don’t know what flipped or what happened—but I asked myself the hard question: ‘What are you gonna die for?’ The reality was, I wasn’t going to die for anything. I lost six friends on my first deployment, and they at least died for me to be able to live.” He credits that stark realization with his first steps to

ized they were only going to treat my symptoms, they weren’t going to help me heal.”

He described one chilling episode where he was prescribed two medications with potentially fatal interactions:

“I was literally on the floor in the kitchen one night in tears, because the shit that they were giving me wasn’t working and I was in so much pain. When I got to the VA the next day, they wanted to put me on tramadol [a potent opioid pain medication]. The doctor had me click something on the screen, and I didn’t really think anything of it.”

“When I got home,” he went on, “I had two bottles sitting on the kitchen counter. I went into the bathroom and I came back out, and my sister had the two bottles in her hands and she was like, ‘Have you taken these yet?’ I said no. She was in school for nursing, and she flips open her drug-interactions book—and

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MATT BAUME

Cucci's Spooky Weed

A stoney drag queen party hosted by Cucci Binaca, April 20 at Kremwerk

APRIL

DOPE Cup 2016

The fifth annual Washington DOPE Cup pits vendors of marijuana-centered goods in a competition for, you guessed it, the DOPE Cup. On April 17, they promise an award ceremony, live music, food, and vendors. *Dockside Cannabis, Sun April 17, 6 pm, \$30.*

420 Fashion Week

Lady Scribe hosts this 4/20 launch party for Legal Stoner's official clothing line, featuring music by DJ RAF and DJ Peg and performances by artists including Ray Sav, Fred Deez, Bruce G, Common Tratez, and Tazzy. To round out the "fashion week" experience, there will also be a networking event on April 19. *Rendezvous, April 19-20, \$45-\$100.*

Warehouse420

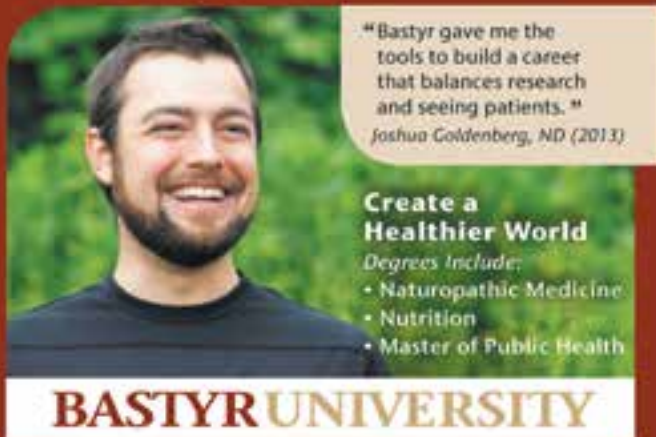
The ultimate lord on high, Snoopy Dogg, is hosting and DJing a 4/20-centric cannabis industry party, and, if that doesn't get you to Bellingham, we don't know what will. An adult bouncy house will be stationed to catch your fall, along with a mechanical bull, industry vendors, other celebrity guests, and probably a whole lot of pot. *Bellingham, Tues April 19,*

7 pm-2 am, \$100.

420Fest

Enjoy food, fun, and music at this 4/20 celebration benefiting incarcerated victims of the drug war. You can help make hemp jewelry and participate in "the usual merriment" in honor of this springtime pot holiday. *LeftJet Studios, Wed April 20, 3-10 pm, \$15.*

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420 Trip

Jeff Nickels and Cory Guebels, directed by Alan Hawkins, will perform this stoner comedy show in honor of 4/20. *The Pocket Theatre*, Wed April 20, 8 pm, \$10/\$14.

Cucci's Spooky Weed

This 4/20 show at Kremwerk promises spooky, stoney, drag queen fun hosted by Cucci Binaca, with performances by Arson Nicki, Cherry Markos, Cucci Binaca, Cookie Couture, La Saveona Hunt, and Miss Americano. *Kremwerk*, Wed April 20, 8 pm, \$5/\$7.

The Green Show

Come to the Atlas Theatre in "high spirits" (no smoking or vaping allowed inside) to enjoy this 21+ improv comedy show by, about, and for people who are thoroughly stoned. *Atlas Theatre*, Third Sat, 10 pm, Wed April 20, 8 pm, \$13.

Hashtag One-Year Cannavarsary and 4/20 Party

The recreational shop is celebrating its first anniversary, conveniently, on April 20. There will be party surprises, giveaways, and music, courtesy of Zach Deputy and Scott Pemberton. *Nectar*, Wed April 20, 8 pm, free.

Leafly Presents: A Night of Higher Entertainment

On 4/20, pay \$4.20 to hear David Schmader read from his new book, *Weed: The User's Guide: A 21st Century Handbook for Enjoying Marijuana*—then, enjoy captivating collage art by Collide-O-Scope on the big screen at the Egyptian. If that's not enough, look forward to special guests and "cannabis-friendly" gift giveaways. *SIFF Cinema Egyptian*, Wed April 20, 7:30 pm, \$4.20.

Smoke Out Vancouver

Despite weed still being illegal in Canada, Vancouverites are throwing caution and roaches to the wind and hosting Smoke Out Vancouver on 4/20 at Sunset

Beach this year. Expect live music, food stalls, craft vendors, and, most likely, some very chill vibes. *Sunset Beach, Vancouver*, Wed April 20, 10 am-7 pm, free.

Uncle Ike's 4/20 Party

Celebrate 4/20 with live glass blowing, freebies, raffles, prizes, and flash sales. *Uncle Ike's*, Wed April 20, 4-7 pm, free.

David Schmader: The 21st Century Weed Handbook

Learn about our brand-new and constantly evolving "golden age" of marijuana from the beloved David Schmader, former *Stranger* writer and author of *Weed: The User's Guide: A 21st Century Handbook for Enjoying Marijuana*. Tonight, he'll talk with a series of local stars, including KEXP DJ Riz Rollins, cartoonist Ellen Forney, writer Sarah Galvin, Seattle City Council Member Nick Licata, and our own Dan Savage. *Town Hall*, Fri April 22, 7:30 pm, \$5.

Seattle Cannabis Freedom March and Global Marijuana March

Experience democracy for botany's sake at a pedestrian pace. This year's theme focuses on the recent developments of Washington State's medical cannabis system and the apparent need for continued reform with regard to current state and federal cannabis laws. There will be over 30 speakers and three bands throughout the day, with citizens and activists marching from Westlake Park to downtown Seattle to support their right to light (up). *Volunteer Park*, Sat April 30, 11 am-7 pm, free.

MAY

The Marijuana Show Pitchfest

The Marijuana Show, a web series that the *New York Times* called "the *Shark Tank* of the cannabis industry," has awarded money to ideas like comic books for stoners and hemp butter products. If you think you have the next great ganjapreneurial idea, grab a ticket to this month's Cannabis



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Tech meetup group to audition for the *The Marijuana Show's* Season 3 lineup. *Club Sur*, Wed May 4, 6-9 pm, \$35.

JUNE

Oregon Hemp Convention

The fact that this convention happens during National Hemp Week and the first summer when pot is legal in Oregon may make this worth the trip to Portland. It's a chance for cannabis industry members to join up with fellow users and enthusiasts and learn about new legal options for recreational consumers, and what innovative forms of concentrates and edibles are now on the market. *Portland Expo Center*, Jun 11-12, \$15/\$20.

JULY

Northwest Cannabis Classic

Seattle is playing host to the second stop of the NW Cannabis Classic tour this July. Vendors, enthusiasts, and industry nerds alike will be able to converge on an as yet undisclosed location for a veritable festival of new cannabis goods, policy workshops, and lifestyle tips, as well as some secret musical guests. Additional event information will be confirmed and released this spring.

AUGUST

Hempfest

Expect vendors, musical guests, weed in every form, and a whole lot of social activism at the 25th annual Hempfest. Heralded as "the premier flagship event of global cannabis culture," Hempfest brings people together to trumpet cannabis policy reform and support of a more lenient mainstream attitude toward all things hemp-adjacent. *Myrtle Edwards Park*, Aug 18-21, \$10 suggested donation.

Highlarious Comedy Festival

Combine comedy and cannabis at the Highlarious Comedy Festival (conveniently timed for Hempfest weekend), when Seattle will

collectively get a bad case of the giggles. No smoking required—all you need to do is not hate weed, and you'll be welcome. Aug 18-21.

SEPTEMBER

Snoop Dogg and Wiz Khalifa: The High Road Tour

Experience a whole evening of hip-hop and pot-related puns with Snoop Dogg and Wiz Khalifa at White River Amphitheatre, along with Kevin Gates, Jhene Aiko, Casey Veggies, and DJ Drama. *White River Amphitheatre*, Fri Sept 2, 7 pm, \$26-\$70.75.

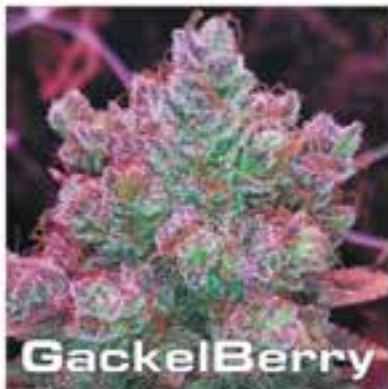
ONGOING

The Goodship Academy of Higher Education

The Goodship Academy of Higher Education is an insanely popular lecture series that invites participants and audience members alike to "pre-board" (toke up beforehand), sparking a stoned, rambling, and amazingly entertaining evening of musing about life. On 4/20, they're featuring Megan Carroll (psychic, energy healer, and yoga teacher), who will speak about "the nature of reality, psychic phenomena and the power of perception." *King Street Station*, \$20.

Winston House Workshops

The Winston House, located somewhere kinda secret on Beacon Hill, is a multifaceted cannabis venue that offers classes and workshops in topics ranging from nude painting to paleo cooking. In addition to the fairly wide variety of culinary and art courses, they have tons of health and wellness classes, including full moon yoga, couples' massage, and "Cannabis 101." It's also one of the few places offering rooms to out-of-towners looking for somewhere safe to consume their legally purchased marijuana—the venue doubles as a (mostly) traditional bed and breakfast, but with more cats, arts, and weed. *The Winston House*, \$25-\$100.



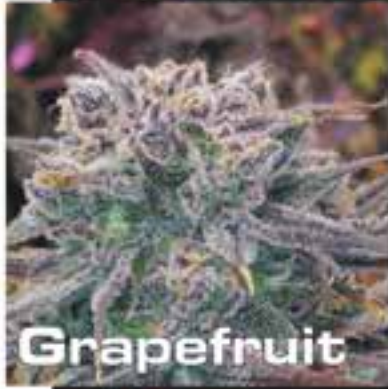
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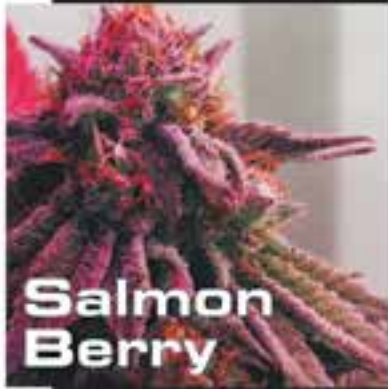
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